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SCHOOL CREDIT FOR HOME WORK

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When I was a young high school principal in McMinnville, Oregon, I found in my class a girl whom I shall call Mary. She was a healthy, happy-go-lucky, careless girl, who did very little work at school and still less at home. She spent her after-school hours on the streets, and in going to the post office and to see the train come in. I wondered what kind of a mother Mary had and what kind of a home she had. I wished that I might talk with Mary's mother, but as I had no solution for the Mary problem I did not go to see her. One day as I was going home, the teacher with whom I was walking said to me, "There is the mother of your Mary." I turned back and crossed the street that I might see Mary's mother. A glimpse at her told me the whole story. She looked weary, overworked, discouraged. I did not speak to her, for I had nothing to say.

After she had passed by I found myself growing indignant, and then thoughtful; then I became excited, for I felt that I was in the presence of a real problem that had not been solved. Maybe I could find the solution! I knew that the working out of it was worth while. Here was Mary, missing her life's opportunity by her hard-hearted indifference to her mother; and here was I, supposed to be helping Mary, but limited by tradition to helping her with such things as quadric equations, the Punic wars, and the nebular hypothesis! What was I to do?

ASSIGNMENT OF REAL WORK

By the next morning I had worked out a plan. Before we took up our books I asked the girls in the algebra class, "How many of you helped with the housework this morning before coming to school?" Some hands were raised, but not Mary's. "How many of you helped make any of the clothes you are wearing?" Hands again, but not Mary's. "How many of you know how to make bread?" Some hands, but still not Mary's. "Now," I said, "I shall assign as usual ten problems for you to report upon at this hour tomorrow,

but five of them are to be from the algebra book and five outside of the book. The five outside of the book, for the girls, are to be:

1. Helping get supper.
2. Helping with the kitchen work after supper.
3. Preparing breakfast.
4. Helping with the kitchen work after breakfast.
5. Putting a bedroom into order.

I thought if the boys remained at home they might at least be exposed to their lessons, so I told the boys that they would be credited with three for remaining at home all the evening, and with two more for bringing in wood and doing their regular chores.

At this announcement the class showed the enthusiasm that always comes with anything new in school, but they also showed signs of an awakening conviction that the things asked of them were really worth while. The look on their faces, from that day forward, gave me the feeling that I had struck something vital. It was as if I were handling wires that had connection with a great dynamo.

The next day I asked those who had done the problems in home helping to raise their hands. Every hand went up, amid much enthusiasm. Then I asked for those who had done the algebra problems, and again all raised their hands. As I looked my approval all hands came down, that is, all hands but Mary's. "What is the matter with your hand, Mary?" I asked. "I worked five problems in advance," she said with sparkling eyes. "I worked all that you gave me, and five more from the book."

CLASSROOM CREDITS FOR HOME WORK

Since that day I have been a firm believer in giving children credit at school for work done at home. We did not work home problems every day that year, but at various times the children were assigned lessons like the one mentioned, and scarcely a day passed that we did not talk over home tasks, and listen to the boys and girls as they told what each had achieved. The idea that washing dishes and caring for chickens was of equal importance with algebra and general history, and that credit and honor would frequently be given for home work, proved a stimulus to all the children, and especially to Mary. She had gained something—a constructive frame of mind—a habit of success. She became three times as good a worker at school, ten times as good a worker at home and

a hundred times happier girl both at school and home. Needless to say her mother was happy as her heavy household cares were in part assumed by her healthy daughter. When graduation time came Mary's mother spoke to me, and she made no attempt to conceal her pride. "Mary is such a *good* girl," she said.

The next fall I became county superintendent and encouraged home work through a "school fair" where every year the children of the county exhibit their handiwork and garden products.

THE SPREAD OF THE MOVEMENT

It was not until I had begun teaching in the University of Oregon that it occurred to me to set forth my plan of giving classroom credit for home work, for the consideration of other teachers and of parents. I wrote a short article on the subject, and had it published in most of the Oregon papers in June, 1910. A year later the idea began to bear fruit; three home-credit schools were established in the winter of 1911-1912, soon to be followed by others. I quote from the article:

How can the school help the home? How can it help the home establish habits in the children of systematic performance of home duties so that they will be efficient and joyful home helpers? One way is for the school to take into account home industrial work and honor it. It is my conviction, based upon careful and continuous observation, that the school can greatly increase the interest the child will take in home industrial work by making it a subject of consideration at school. A teacher talked of sewing, and the girls sewed. She talked of ironing, and they wanted to learn to iron neatly. She talked of working with tools, and both girls and boys made bird houses, kites, and other things of interest. . . .

The school can help make better home-builders. It can help by industrial work done in the school. The plan I have in mind will cost no money, will take but little school time, and can be put into operation in every part of the state at once. It will create a demand for expert instruction later on. It is to give school credit for industrial work done at home. The mother and father are to be recognized as teachers, and the school teacher put into the position of one who cares about the habits and tastes of the whole child. Then the teacher and the parents will have much in common. Every home has the equipment for industrial work and has some one who uses it with more or less skill.

The school has made so many demands on the home that the parents have in some cases felt that all the time of the child must be given to the school. But an important thing that the child needs along with school work is established habits of home-making. . . . In my opinion it will be a great thing for the child to want to help his parents do the task that needs to be done and to want to do it in the best possible way. The reason why so many country boys are now lead-

ing men of affairs is because early in life they had home responsibilities thrust upon them. I am sure that the motto "Everybody Helps" is a good one.

But one says: "How can it be brought about? How can the school give credit for industrial work done at home?" It may be done by sending home printed slips asking the parents to take account of the work that the child does at home under their instruction, and explaining that credit will be given for this work on the school record. These slips must be used according to the age of the child, for it must be clearly recognized that children must have time for real play. The required tasks must not be too arduous, yet they must be real tasks. They must not be tasks that will put extra work on parents except in the matter of instruction and observation. They may well call for the care of animals, and should include garden work for both boys and girls. Credit in school for home industrial work (with the parents' consent) should count as much as any one study in school.

To add interest to the work, exhibitions should be given at stated times so that all may learn from each other and the best be the model for all.

DEFINITE SCHOOL CREDITS FOR HOME WORK

Since that time dozens of interesting printed record cards have been devised, yet many schools still use the simple plan of daily notes from the parent to the teacher. Daily or weekly reports are found more successful than less frequent ones. The lists of home tasks¹ issued by various teachers and superintendents include everything "from plowing to washing the baby for breakfast." The incentives vary, too; some schools have a contest for credits, with prizes at the end of the year, but the large number give marks, usually totals of credits, to all the students. Some schools give holidays as rewards, some add a few credits to the study in which the child most needs credit (with the frequently observed result that the child works hard for real proficiency in that study) while others find it sufficient to mark home work as one study on the report card. One of our most successful Portland teachers merely issues the home work cards and receives them when filled, and registers the fact that they are filed in a record book, yet by her attitude of encouragement she has had most of her pupils doing home work faithfully for three years. The important thing seems to be the valuation put upon the children's out-of-school efforts by the teacher. Many boys are glad to get credit for household tasks, when the work is considered honorable and the other boys are doing it. "Every boy should know how to sew, just as every girl should know how to whittle.

¹For complete home-credit plans see the author's book *School Credit for Home Work*, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., New York.

Every boy should know how to cook, just as every girl should know how to swim. Skill in the elemental arts is a form of what Henderson calls human wealth. All should participate."

Some cards made out for city schools give a large place to hygiene, to care of books, clothes, etc., to getting lessons on time, going to bed on time and going to school on time "without constant urging." Others give such urban tasks as "sweeping sidewalk," "driving delivery wagon," "carrying a paper route." Some schools encourage children to do the things that boy scouts and camp fire girls do.

Some of the high schools have very complete arrangements for home work as a part of the practice in manual training, agriculture, cooking, sewing, or the commercial studies, and take account of vacation work, too. Music lessons, under accredited teachers; and Bible study, tested by an examination given by the school, are credited in many high schools. The maximum credit allowed for industrial work is usually two units out of the fifteen or sixteen required for graduation.